

THE WINDOW

THE LATEST US ELECTIONS

50 million people in the United States went to the polls in 1940, the great majority casting their vote for Franklin D. Roosevelt. Only 33 million availed themselves of their voting privilege on November 3, 1942, and of those who did only a very slight majority voted for President Roosevelt's party. What does this imply? The answer is presented by someone who has played a role in American political life and is intimately acquainted with it.—K.M.

OBSERVERS are busy everywhere trying to find the reason for the marked political apathy of the American people as expressed in the recent elections held in November. Amid the maze of contradictory opinions, certain facts stand out clearly and unequivocally.

The American people are so confused by the sudden onslaught of the war that they are at a loss as to how to take a definite stand regarding their long-term future political beliefs. Most Americans had believed that there was plenty of time for preparation before the actions of their politicians would bring the nation into the firing line. They had believed that this preparation would continue until such time as the enemy was exhausted and on the verge of collapse, and that then the United States would declare war and finish it off in a grand, victorious style. This line of thought was based on the precedent of the last World War, when Germany fought for four years against the Allies, who were supplied with American war materials, and then, exhausted, starved, and racked by internal disunion, was attacked by the fresh American forces. Too great a reliance was placed this time on the protective walls of the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. From this spirit of nonchalance, the American public was rudely awakened on a certain Sunday morning when hell broke loose in Pearl Harbor.

"OFF-YEAR" ELECTION

The recent election consequently reflects the public's obvious lack of confidence in the competence of the Roosevelt party in so far as the conduct of the war is concerned. The Americans felt that the Administration had failed in peace time in carrying out a plan that had proved so successful in the last war. They felt too that, having failed

in following Wilson's peace-time precedent, the Government might just as easily fail in war time to bring about a victory like Wilson's. This left a large part of the American population in a state of complete apathy toward the elections. They wanted to have no part in what they felt was in store for them. They wanted to keep their hands off the candidates, and the best way to do this was to stay away from the voting machines.

In the USA, important elections take place every second autumn. On each occasion, all 435 members of the House of Representatives, 32 of the 96 members of the Senate, and a certain number of the 48 State Governors, are elected. In addition to this, there is a presidential election every fourth autumn, the autumn of every leap year. The years in which a President is chosen (1932, '36, '40, '44, etc.) are known as "presidential election years"; those in between (1934, '38, '42, etc.) as "off years."

Although this was an "off-year" election, it does not necessarily follow that such an election should attract any the less public attention. In fact, the "off-year" elections are more often a true mirror of the public's feelings as regards national policies than are the presidential elections. In the latter, the issues of national policy are frequently overshadowed by the intensity of the fight and the introduction of personalities. Hence they do not give us as clear-cut a picture on national policies as do the "off-year" elections.

HISTORICAL PARALLEL

A typical example of this was the 1918 "off-year" election during the Wilson Administration. It also serves as a precedent for the view just expressed. As will be recalled, Congress was Democratic from 1916

to 1918 as a result of the previous 1916 presidential election, in which the American people re-elected Wilson on a platform of "he kept us out of war." The 1916 election had shown that the electorate approved of Wilson's national policy. It may be compared with the election of 1940, in which Roosevelt was re-elected. In the 1940 election, Roosevelt likewise promised to keep the United States out of the war and used such slogans as "your boys are not going to be sent into foreign wars" (30.10.40). The American people believed that they were to be kept out of the war by supplying aid to Britain in the form of war materials only, so that Britain would be able to prevent the war from spreading beyond Europe. So they elected Roosevelt.

But, after the 1916 election, Wilson went to war in 1917. Likewise, after the 1940 election, America, as a result of Roosevelt's policy, found herself at war in 1941. The technical difference that Wilson declared war while Roosevelt had war declared on him, did not appreciably change the public's attitude. Most people in America knew by then that the Administration was wedded to the idea of a war, but felt that it might be postponed until 1944, when a candidate for "no war unless the country were invaded" might come forward.

In the "off-year" election of 1918, Wilson was surprised to find his Democratic control in Congress disappear when the proportion of the 1916 elections of 214 Democrats and 208 Republicans was changed to 193 Democrats and 239 Republicans. The Senate's composition likewise changed from 53 Democrats and 43 Republicans to 47 Democrats and 48 Republicans.

NEW TREND AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

This may be compared with the 1942 election, as a result of which a similar though not quite as radical a change took place. The 1940 composition of 267 Democrats, 162 Republicans, and 6 representatives of Third Parties, was altered to 221 Democrats, 209 Republicans, and 5 representatives of Third Parties, leaving only a precarious majority in favor of the Administration. The Democratic hold on the Senate was also

reduced from 65 to 57 Democrats, while the Republicans increased from 29 to 38. Among the 33 newly elected State Governors, 15 are Republicans and 18 Democrats. The Republicans gained new victories in such key states as New York, California, and Michigan.

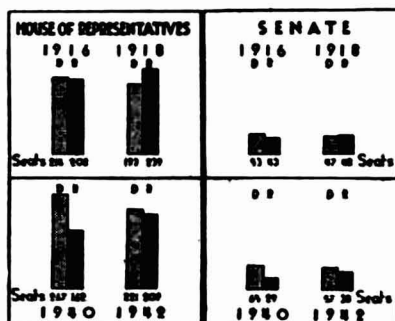
The implications of this similarity in the "off-year" elections of 1918 and 1942 are revealed by a study of the effect of the 1918 election trend on the presidential election of 1920, in which the Democrats were decisively beaten. The Electoral College of 1920 showed 404 Republican votes as against only 127 Democrats.

It should be explained that, unlike all other candidates, the President of the United States is not elected by the direct votes of the people but by the members of an Electoral College composed of delegates chosen by the people of each state. The number of members of the Electoral College is equal to the total number of Congressmen and Senators from all the states. Since there were 435 Congressmen and 96 Senators in the legislature in 1918, or a total of 531 representatives, that number likewise represents the number of members of the Electoral College of 1920. Consequently, the election of 404 electors for the Republican candidate and only 127 for the Democratic one shows to what extent the Wilsonian Democratic policies were repudiated at that election. This result was fully forecast by the trend shown in the "off-year" election figures of 1918.

Turning then to compare this with the situation at the next presidential election and the "off-year" election of 1942, we see that they are similar both in situation and tendency. Just as the "off-year" election of 1918 served as a guide to the result of the 1920 presidential election, the 1942 election may be considered a guide to the coming presidential election of 1944. If these implications are correct, we may expect the Democratic Party to lose that election.

THIRD PARTY POSSIBILITIES

However, it is not as easy as that. There are other facts and circumstances which may prove 1944 an exception to this rule. The political back-



Comparison of Congress in 1916 and 1918 with Congress in 1940 and 1942 (D=Democrat; R=Republicans)

ground today is not the same as it was in 1918.

One of the most important differences is to be found in the fact that there are stronger possibilities for a Third Party surprise. We refer in particular to Labor's Non-Partisan League, a political organization composed of America's two largest labor organizations: the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) and the American Federation of Labor (AFL). The labor unions are much stronger now than they were in 1920, having many more members and new labor organizations. The CIO was not formed until 1936 and has developed into an organization of over 4 million members.

All this has an important bearing on the question of whether or not there will be any real opposition to the Democratic presidential candidate in 1944 in the form of a Third Party. Although the history of American politics shows that so-called Third Parties have never been successful at any presidential election, this precedent may be shattered in 1944. It would be folly to predict their victory, but it would be equally wrong if we were totally to ignore their chances of success.

... AND THIRD PARTY GAINS

Briefly reviewing the Third Party situation we note that, while they have not scored yet in presidential elections, they have nevertheless had local successes in State elections for governors, city elections for mayors, as well as in small towns and farm communities. Twice within this century a Third Party, the Progressives, made a good showing in presidential elections, in 1912 when with 4,124,597 votes they eclipsed the Republicans and came close to the 6,298,857 votes of the winning Democrats, and in 1924 when their candidate La Follette received 4,822,319 votes to the 15,718,789 of the Republicans and the 8,378,962 of the Democrats.

The strongest of the Third Parties today is Labor's Non-Partisan League, which is affiliated to the American Labor's Party in New York City. There are also the Socialist

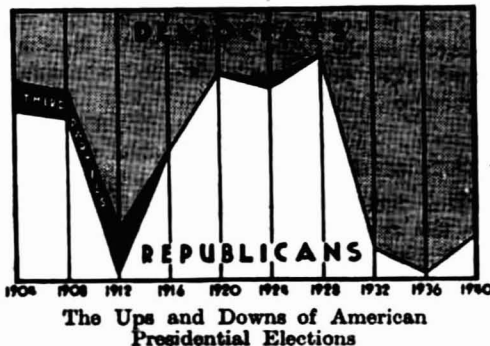
Labor Party led by Arnold Petersen, the Socialist Party led by Norman Thomas, and the Communist Party led by William Foster, all of which are political movements of limited appeal. Then follow the Progressive Party led by Senator La Follette (the son of the presidential candidate of 1924), the Farmer-Laborites led by Vice-President Wallace, the Fusion Party led by Mayor La Guardia, the Union Party led by outspoken, anti-Semitic Father Coughlin, and perhaps a dozen others of less consequence.

There are other groups in America, which, although not called political parties, are more powerful than many of the Third Parties from the point of view of possible support for an "Independent" presidential candidate in 1944. Among these, the American Legion (the organization of the veterans of former wars), and the isolationist "America First Committee" (with over 600 local chapters) carry considerable weight as regards swinging political power and votes.

It would, of course, be interesting to know what the effect would be if the Independent presidential candidate should sponsor a peace program, backed by all these independent organizations. Such a development in 1944 should not be excluded.

REPUBLICAN-DEMOCRATIC FUSION

To counteract this possibility, President Roosevelt recently made the clever move of suggesting the combining of the Democrats and Republicans into one political party. This suggestion implies a recognition of the strength of the Third Party groups and the fact that their combined force may possibly be too great for either one of the two major political parties to withstand. Active preparations for the political fight of 1944 are going on, with the strategy and groundwork being done now. This is in order to supply an open-and-shut case for public consumption and to allow the least amount of time for public deliberation before the election. As regards issues, the fight between the Democratic Party and the Republican Party is settled long before the election takes place.



Then, during the campaign, both sides occupy the minds of the public with these issues, bring the "fight" to considerable intensity, blot out all opposition to either party by any Third Party effort, and ensure the election for either the Democrats or the Republicans. After the election, the "fight" is over, and the friendship between the two parties is once again exposed to public view.

One of the best examples of this was the contest between Willkie as the Republican candidate and Roosevelt as the Democratic opponent. After the election, Roosevelt appointed Willkie as his *personal* representative. This proves that the rivalry between the Republican and the Democratic Parties is not sincere; and the public is becoming more and more aware of the fact that this rivalry is nothing more than a camouflage for retaining control of the United States within the joint ranks of the Republican-Democratic clique. For this reason, increasing interest is being placed in the 1944 Independent candidate and the possible support which he may receive from the combined Third Parties.

1944 PRESIDENTIAL POSSIBILITIES

Governor Bricker of Ohio, recently re-elected, is at the moment the most likely candidate for president on the expected Third Party ticket. Others mentioned are isolationist Senators and Congressmen, prominent among whom are Senators Nye, Holt, Wheeler, La Follette, and Congressman Fish. La Follette is the most likely candidate from among the Senators.

For the probable Republican presidential candidate we can look to Wendell Willkie or Thomas E. Dewey. With a margin of 600,000, Dewey defeated his Democratic opponent for governorship in the State of New York, the most important of all the 48 states of the union. Other possibilities are Senators Vandenburg and Taft and Governor Stassen of Minnesota.

On the Democratic ticket, the most probable candidate for presidency is still Franklin D. Roosevelt, who is quite likely to run for a fourth term. On the other hand, it is possible that, following upon President Roosevelt's recent suggestion for a fusion between the Democratic and Republican Parties, Roosevelt may withdraw as a Democratic candidate in favor of Willkie as a joint Republican and Democratic candidate. This move would ensure the election for Willkie and the interests represented by him. Judging from the "personal representa-

tive" relationship between Roosevelt and Willkie, these interests are, indeed, very similar to Roosevelt's. Hence such a move would satisfy their common backers as a basis for certain victory.

THE SOLDIERS' VOTE

All these calculations are based on the reactions of the civilian voters, and they may be somewhat upset by the soldiers' vote. A law was recently passed giving soldiers the right to vote. Conditions at the front may satisfy or dissatisfy the soldiers, and they may feel like having another commander in chief, who happens to be the President of the United States. Much depends upon the treatment they receive, especially at the time of the election. In one of its most recent issues, the American magazine *News Week* disclosed that the War Department as well as the Navy Department in Washington have tried to exclude those American troops from voting who are stationed abroad. According to this magazine, it was feared that their life abroad may have given them dangerous ideas which would find expression in their vote.

The soldiers' vote—or its absence—is important, as was seen from what happened in 1917. While the soldiers were at the front—and at that time they were not permitted to vote—the Prohibition Amendment was passed by the civilian voters. This was partly possible because of the absence of the soldiers' vote. That this was a national error can be seen from the fact that later, in 1933, with the full vote of the public, including the ex-soldiers, this Amendment was repealed. The right of soldiers to vote at the front was granted recently in order to allay the public's fears that, in the absence of the soldiers, another national error might be committed.

The relations between President Wilson and Congress after the defeat of the Democratic Party in the "off-year" election of 1918 were characterized by constant friction and colored the last year of his office with great personal disappointment. The defeat of Roosevelt's party in 1942 was not quite so bad, for it still has 221 out of 435 seats. But, as we have said before, this majority is very precarious. There will be issues, at least in domestic politics, where the anti-New Dealers among the Democrats will side with the Republicans against the President. Since November 3, 1942, Roosevelt is no longer the same master of Congress that he was before.—F.W.